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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002863

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/E  
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CJTF-HOA AND USCENTCOM FOR POLAD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: MOVING FORWARD ON BORDER IMPASSE TO  
AVOID CONFLICT

Classified By: Political Officer Ted Harkema for Reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. This is an action request message see para 18. On September 17 Ambassador and Poloff attended a Friends of United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) meeting at UNMEE HQ. Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Azouz Ennifar reported there had been no

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major troop movements along the Ethiopian-Eritrean border since July and the border was quiet for now. He also reminded the group UNMEE's ability to monitor troop movements in Sector West and Sector East was limited. UNMEE Addis Ababa Head of Office Joseph Stefanides briefed the September 6-7 Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) meeting in the Hague had produced no basis for consensus between the parties on border demarcation. Lastly, Ennifar raised the possibility Ethiopia may be considering withdrawing from the EEBC in protest of the EEBC's decision to demarcate the border by coordinates on November 27. See para 8 for actions. Post recommends urging the parties to avoid conflict and re-engage the two parties to talk about implementation and the impact of demarcation. END SUMMARY.

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UNMEE: BORDER QUIET BUT ABILITY TO MONITOR LIMITED  
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12. (C) Ambassador and Poloff attended a Friends of UNMEE meeting on September 17 during which senior UNMEE officials Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Azouz Ennifar and Head of UNMEE Office Addis Ababa Joseph Stefanides briefed the group on the military situation along the border and gave a readout of the September 6-7 Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) meeting in the Hague. Ennifar briefed there had been no major troop movements on either side since July which he attributed largely to movement restrictions caused by heavy rains. He reported in the previous two days approximately 250-300 Eritrean troops had entered Sector Center marking an increase in Eritrean troop presence inside the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). Ennifar cautioned, however, UNMEE's ability to observe Eritrean troop movements in Sector West and Sector East were limited because the terrain allowed troop movement outside the main lines of communication. On the other side of the border, most Ethiopian troops were positioned outside of the adjacent zone where UNMEE was not permitted to patrol. He noted both Eritrean and Ethiopian forces were continuing

to build defensive positions along the border.

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SEPTEMBER 6-7 EEBC MEETING BATTLE OF DUELING LEGAL ADVISORS  
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13. (C) Stephanides briefed the September 6-7 EEBC meeting had ended with no basis for consensus between the two parties. He commented the meeting was primarily a battle between each side's American legal advisors who traded shots back and forth. Eritrea offered to take whatever steps required to facilitate border demarcation on the ground, but Ethiopia insisted Eritrea withdraw fully from the TSZ before further discussions could occur. Stefanides noted the positions of the two parties had not changed as Eritrea was demanding demarcation prior to normalization, whereas Ethiopia demanded broader discussions of normalization first and Eritrean withdrawal from the TSZ. Ennifar noted despite the positions of the parties, the EEBC was determined to follow through with demarcation by coordinates on November 27.

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ETHIOPIA CONSIDERING WITHDRAWAL FROM EEBC?  
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14. (C) Ennifar urged the international community and the witnesses to take whatever steps they could to help move the political process forward and avoid conflict. Ennifar highlighted an excerpt from a September 17 press interview with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles as evidence the Ethiopian government may be looking to withdraw from the EEBC process. He quoted Meles saying, "They (EEBC) may delimitate the border on maps but demarcation can only be viable if implemented on the ground. There might be a need for another body in the future..." When asked what Ethiopia might do in

ADDIS ABAB 00002863 002 OF 003

response to the EEBC decision, Ennifar speculated Ethiopia might pre-denounce the decision before November 27.

15. (C) When queried whether the EEBC had the right to demarcate by coordinates, Ennifar responded the UN had no standing upon which to express a legal opinion on the matter. The EEBC was an independent body set up by the two parties. Ennifar relayed EEBC President Elihu Lauterpacht admitted this was not the EEBC's mandate, but Lauterpacht maintained it was the best possible solution given the continuing lack of cooperation by Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ambassador reaffirmed demarcation was an issue between the parties themselves and only the two in agreement could reject the EEBC's actions. Stefanides noted Ethiopia may have grounds to reject the decision because Eritrean restrictions on UNMEE and militarization of the TSZ are in violation of the cease-fire agreement.

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) Ennifar opined privately to us there are deep fears within the international community that there is a higher potential for renewed fighting as a result of the impasse on resolution of the border demarcation after the September 6 EEBC meeting at the Hague. During meetings at UNMEE and among Ambassadors in Addis, it is strongly felt within the international community that both parties lack the resolve to settle the border dispute and, more important, the more critical point of resolving the fundamental issues that divide both countries. While both militaries are disciplined, Eritrean encroachment into the TSZ places both militaries within meters of each other. Both parties do not favor renewed hostilities but the risk of a minor mistake escalating into widespread military action is real. Both sides appears ready to respond to any attack, real or assumed.

17. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. Meles faces tough opposition

with the powerful Central Committee, particularly with the hard-core Tigray leaders who wield authority within the committee. Meles has always indicated in very private meetings that he is willing to compromise on Badme if it would bring sustainable peace, but it would cost him his prime ministership. Until there are signs of compromise from Eritrea towards an Ethiopian solution (normalization of relations in conjunction with demarcation), Meles is stuck in the current impasse.

18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. Despite the fact that neither side appears ready to resolve their problems, Post believes as a result of the continued seriousness of the border impasse, actions must be taken to avoid war. Bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are deeply interwoven, adversely affecting the demarcation process. Resolution of the bilateral problems must be addressed as part of the resolution of the demarcation impasse. Demarcation of the border will not sustain peace and will exacerbate divisions unless a comprehensive package dealing with the fundamental differences of the two countries are also addressed. Ethiopia,s position of bilateral (normalization talks) discussions and Eritrea,s expansion of the battlefield to include arms sales in Somalia to undermine Ethiopian security have made the demarcation process complex. Post views the current situation as serious and recommends following actions be taken to avoid conflict and re-engage parties.

#### Part I: Immediate Action:

- U.S. privately urges the UN to call immediately a meeting of the witnesses to reaffirm UNSC resolutions supporting peaceful demarcation of the border
- Witnesses reaffirm the Algiers Accord which calls on the affirmation of the sanctity of the TSZ and UNSC 1640 which calls on Eritrea to respect the TSZ and lift restrictions on UNMEE operations; and for both parties to withdraw troops to their positions prior to December 2004
- Witnesses reaffirm importance of UNMEE and support to continue UNMEE for another three months minimum into May 2008

ADDIS ABAB 00002863 003 OF 003

- Witnesses issue a statement calling on both sides to avoid war and to declare their commitment to resolving their bilateral differences
- The UNSC issues a resolution/statement supporting the statement of the witnesses
- Both Witnesses and UNSC declare firm commitment to a demarcation process and recognizes the EEBC process and its decision to demarcate by map coordinates. However, the Witnesses and UNSC must not/not take any action to enforce such a decision and must clearly and unequivocally declare that both parties ultimately must resolve their differences directly and demarcate the border

#### Part II: Private Initiatives:

- Privately urge U/SYG Amb Pascoe to push forward his desire for private discussions between the Eritreans and Ethiopians at UNGA
- Privately urge the UN to meet with political representatives, not the American lawyers, of both parties
- Private meetings with the parties should include clear indication that the international community is prepared to host normalization talks in a country of choice by the parties; full backing for peaceful demarcation process; and commitment to work on consequences of the demarcation process including refugees and economic dislocation as a result of demarcation.

- Privately approach both parties (U.S., UK and UN with Ethiopia, EU and UN with Eritrea) on reaffirmation by both parties to &open borders8 after demarcation and respect for "territorial sovereignty." Further, privately pressure both parties not/not to go to war. END COMMENT.  
YAMAMOTO